



For Immediate Release:
Thursday, February 10, 2011

Media Contact:

David Neville

Tobacco Prevention and Control Program
(o) 801-538-6917 (c) 801-386-1316

News Release

Health Groups Unite to Warn of Tobacco's Risk to Children *New Web Site Launches to Educate Community on New Tobacco Products*

(SALT LAKE CITY) – According to a recently published study in *Pediatrics*, nearly 90 percent of tobacco exposure calls to poison control centers involve children younger than six years of age.

At a news conference today at Primary Children's Medical Center (PCMC), the Utah Department of Health (UDOH), PCMC and Utah Poison Control Center joined together to remind the community of the dangers of tobacco. They also announced the launch of www.StreetSmartUtah.org a site developed by UDOH to educate the public on just how appealing tobacco products are to children and how dangerous they are if chewed or swallowed.

"Tobacco products are deadly enough for adults, and children have developing bodies half the size of adults, so these toxins are much deadlier for kids," said Charles W. Pruitt, M.D., FAAP, Medical Advisor for Child Advocacy, Primary Children's Medical Center. "In fact, if a child eats two cigarette butts, Emergency Department rules state that it is a life-threatening situation," Pruitt added.

According to a Food and Drug Administration study, in 2008 alone there were 233 new tobacco products, including 151 new cigarette products and 43 new chewing-tobacco choices. "Many of these products come in candy-like flavors, are packaged like gum and candy, and the advertising for them is appealing to children and teens," said David Neville of the UDOH Tobacco Prevention and Control Program.

Depending on the size of the child, as little as one tobacco-laced dissolvable lozenge can cause side effects ranging from nausea and vomiting to heart arrhythmias and seizures.

-MORE-

Page 2 of 2 – Health Groups Unite to Warn of Tobacco’s Risk to Children

“While all tobacco products are addicting, the new dissolvable tobacco products are a greater concern for childhood poisoning,” said Barbara Insley Crouch, PharmD, MSPH, director of Utah Poison Control Center. “The candy-like appearance, enhanced flavoring, and attractive packaging put children at risk for accidental ingestion.”

“This is why it’s so important that adults don’t even start using tobacco,” said Dr. Pruitt. “Having tobacco products lying around the home presents a clear health threat, especially to young children who put everything in their mouths.”

Tobacco prevention and control efforts in Utah are working, but much more needs to be done. Tobacco use costs Utah taxpayers \$369 million in smoking-related medical expenses and \$294 million in lost productivity each year. Cost-effective anti-tobacco programs and quit services provide a return on investment through the resulting health and economic benefits for the state. In addition to saving lives, each percentage point reduction in the smoking rate equals savings of \$315 million in future health care costs.

For free help quitting tobacco, call the Utah Tobacco Quit Line at 1.800.QUIT.NOW or visit UtahQuitNet.com.

#

The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.